

Sixth ascended the throne it was said that a hundred thousand clergy came to Avignon to traffic in simony.¹ Petrarch, who grew up like a fair flower amid the fungus growth that surrounded the rotting trunk of the Papacy, learnt to speak of that Court with horror and shame, and retired to the pursuit of classical scholarship in Italy. The indignation felt by all honest men at such a state of things was accentuated in England by national jealousy, and the perception that the French had overreached us and that the laugh was on their side. The Commons of the Good Parliament, in language which seems more suited to their successors in the days of the Gunpowder Plot than to pious Catholics, spoke in their petitions of the 'sinful city of Avenon.'²

For long the Popes seemed indifferent alike to the scandals of their Court and the ignominy of their servitude. John the Twenty-second, who dabbled in theology, favoured the world with some views of his own on the Beatific Vision.

This sign of returning independence was promptly suppressed by the Paris theologians, and he was forced to recant.³ But as the century went on, his successors began to remember the ancient prestige and power of the office they held. They carried on diplomacy and war on their own account, restored their temporal power over the Romagna and assailed Tuscany by the arms of Breton and English mercenaries. These devastating wars only served to alienate still further the hearts of the Italians, who began to regard the Pope as a cruel foreign conqueror. It became clear that, unless Italy was to be lost to Papal influence, the Pope must again become an Italian, and Rome must once more be made the emporium of the traffic in simony and superstition. In the winter of 1376-77 Gregory the Eleventh set sail from Marseilles, landed near Civita Vecchia, and proceeded to the Eternal City. He found it a mass of ruins, in whose midst he once more pitched the camp of the Church. The Lateran Palace and the quarter round it, where his mighty predecessors had ruled the earth, were sunk in hopeless decay. That part of the city was left to shelter the murderous banditti that prowled like ghouls

¹ Michelet, in. 416.

² *Hot. Park*, ii. 336-9, *pets*, xl-xlviii.

³ Sismondi, tome x. 80-3, *Hist. des Francois** ed. 1821~44.